

# Nashville District

## Human Resources Newsletter

### "News You Can Use"

Issue 03-01-03

1 March 03

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep Nashville District employees informed about personnel issues, concerns, and topics. You are encouraged to review the information and disseminate to your organization. If there are particular areas of interest that you would like to see addressed in future issues, an article of general interest, or general comments, please contact John Restey at 615-736-5538 or [John.G.Restey@lrm02.usace.army.mil](mailto:John.G.Restey@lrm02.usace.army.mil).

## General News:

### **M2M??????????**

This term is simply a shortened way of saying "**Modern to Modern**". M2M is an abbreviation used to describe the consolidation of all CONUS Modern Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (MDCPDS) databases into one central database located at Rock Island Arsenal, IL.

Army is consolidating many automated personnel processes to better support our customers. By having the database in one location, we can more quickly and efficiently update the automated systems we use. Currently the Nashville District Data Base is on the South Central CPOC server even though we are serviced by the Southwest CPOC. When the change-over is completed, the data base will that show that we belong to the SW Region.

When we come back up on the central site, the USER ID will be setup the same as the AKO USER ID. For CPOC users, this means one user ID to access all employees serviced, rather than one for each region where they have serviced employees.

The information below explains how M2M will affect employees:

### **HISTORY:**

Currently, Army civilian employee records have been maintained in ten separate regional databases. Seven of these databases have been maintained by the five Continental United States (CONUS) Civilian Personnel Operations Centers (CPOCs) and the remaining are maintained by the three Outside the Continental United States (OCONUS) CPOCs.

## **WHAT'S CHANGING?**

All CONUS CPOC databases are being centralized into the Army Civilian Data Center located at Rock Island Arsenal, IL. This means Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) system users will no longer access geographically dispersed regional databases. Rather, they will access the central database at Rock Island to process personnel actions. OCONUS CPOCs may centralize as early as July 2003.

## **WHY THE CHANGE?**

Army is consolidating many automated personnel processes to better support our customers. By having the database in one location, we can more quickly and efficiently update the automated systems we use.

## **IMPACT ON EMPLOYEES:**

Very little impact on employees other than specific actions that may be held up during the transition period. DCPDS will not be available to managers for a 2-3 week blackout period (to be determined). All Requests for Personnel Action (RPAs) located in the CPAC or CPOC when the transition period starts, will be automatically moved from DCPDS at their Region into a new centralized DCPDS at Rock Island. The CPOCs will then have access to check the system, test the changes, and begin processing actions. During the transition period, CPOCs will be working on functions that do not require DCPDS such as classifying jobs, rating and ranking applications, processing referral lists and other actions not requiring the automated system.

## **WHAT SHOULD EMPLOYEES DO?**

If you have an action that is to be effective during the transition period noted above, you should contact your supervisor, who in-turn will contact their CPAC. Arrangements should be made to either have these actions fully processed before the transition period starts or after it completes. If you have questions regarding this or any other actions that may be affected by this transition, contact your supervisor who will in-turn contact their servicing CPAC.

## **SAME SCHOLARSHIP NEWS - William James**

In 1990, the Nashville Post awarded our first scholarship in the amount of \$500. From that modest beginning, we have now provided 138 scholarships totaling nearly \$179,000. The scholarships have been awarded to 89 deserving students majoring in the fields of engineering, architecture, mathematics, and computer science at 23 different universities. The scholarship application form and application criteria for the 2003-2004 academic year are included in this newsletter. The application form can also be found on the Post web site at [www.samenashvillepost.org](http://www.samenashvillepost.org). We ask all sustaining members to assist us in publicizing the scholarship program throughout their firms. Deadline for receipt of the scholarship applications is April 18, 2003. Questions can be directed to William James at [william.l.james@lrn02.usace.army.mil](mailto:william.l.james@lrn02.usace.army.mil) or by phone at (615) 369-7508.

Our scholarships are partially funded through our annual golf tournament. This year's tournament will be at Windtree Golf Course on May 2<sup>nd</sup> with a shotgun start at 1:00. Claudia Bower and Paula Harris are once again co-chairing the tournament. Questions about the tournament, sign ups, sponsorships, etc. can be directed to Claudia at 615-885-8640, e-mail at [cbower@connico.com](mailto:cbower@connico.com) or Paula at 615-254-1500, e-mail at [peharris@bwsc.net](mailto:peharris@bwsc.net).

## **NO FEAR LAW**

In early May 2002 President Bush signed the Notification and Federal Anti-Discrimination and Retaliation Act, or No Fear law, which requires agencies to notify employees of their ability to challenge personnel practice and whistleblower violations. In compliance, the following information was obtained through Civilian Personnel On-Line (CPOL) at the PERMISS website [<http://www.cpol.army.mil/permis/12a.html>](http://www.cpol.army.mil/permis/12a.html). Additional information can be found through the references provided at that site. This information will be reiterated annually.

## **Merit System Principles**

Personnel management is based on and embodies the Merit System Principles. The merit system principles are the public's expectations of a system that is efficient, effective, fair, open to all, free from political interference, and staffed by honest, competent, and dedicated employees. As the Department of Army experiences continued change in the management of human resources (centralization, deregulation, delegation, etc.), it becomes increasingly important that line supervisors and managers incorporate the merit system principles into every decision process they use.

### **The merit system principles are:**

1. Recruit qualified individuals from all segments of society and select and advance employees on the basis of merit after fair and open competition which assures that all receive equal opportunity.
2. Treat employees and applicants fairly and equitably, without regard to political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin sex, martial status, age, or handicapping condition, and with proper regard for their privacy and constitutional rights.
3. Provide equal pay for equal work and recognize excellent performance.
4. Maintain high standards of integrity, conduct, and concern for the public interest.
5. Manage employees efficiently and effectively.
6. Retain and separate employees on the basis of their performance.
7. Educate and train employees when it will result in better organizational or individual performance.
8. Protect employees from arbitrary action, personal favoritism, or coercion for partisan political purposes.

9. Protect employees against reprisal for the lawful disclosure of information in "whistleblower" situation (i.e., protecting people who report things like illegal and/or wasteful activities).

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) <<http://www.osc.gov>> The OSC is an independent investigative and prosecutorial Executive branch agency. Its mission is to:

- Receive and investigate allegations of prohibited personnel practices;
- Provide secure channel for disclosure of violations of law, gross mismanagement, waste of funds, etc. (whistleblowing).
- Enforce Hatch Act (restrictions on political activity).

Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB). <<http://www.mspb.gov/>> The MSPB is an independent agency in the Executive branch that serves as the guardian of the Federal Merit Systems. The MSPB's mission is:

- Hearing and deciding employee appeals from agency actions;
- Hearing and deciding cases brought by the Office of Special Counsel involving alleged abuses of the merit systems;
- Conducting special studies of the civil service; and
- Providing oversight of significant actions and regulations of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to determine if they are in accord with merit system.

### **Emergency Contact Data**

Current events involving Noble Eagle/Enduring Freedom reinforce the need for obtaining and maintaining current emergency points of contact for Army employees. The Army's web-based emergency contact data bank incorporates emergency notification information for next of kin in the event of a crisis situation. The emergency contact database can be accessed through <<http://cpol.army.mil/main/contacts/index.html>> or <<http://cpol.army.mil/>>. The website provides instructions for accessing the system and entering the data. Social security numbers are used for the USER ID since it is the one account that distinguishes each individual without duplication. The number is not displayed on the screen but is represented as asterisks (\*). Due to the terms of the Privacy Act, providing the information requested in the database is voluntary. **Please Note:** Due to a hardware failure that houses the Emergency Contact Data, information entered or edited between 1500 EST 5 January 2003 and 1530 EST 16 January 2003 should be reviewed for accuracy.

## **Important Notice to Applicants Using Army's Resume Builder in January 2003**

Resumes created or edited between 1500 EST 5 January 2003 and 1530 EST 16 January 2003 may have been impacted by a hardware failure that houses the Army Resume Builder. Applicants who created or edited a resume during that time frame are encouraged to go into the Army Resume Builder to check the status of their resume by accessing ANSWER at the following link:

<https://cpsrxtp.belvoir.army.mil/staffing/answer/online/apps/default.asp>. Applicants submitting a resume by clicking on the "submit" button and applying against an open vacancy announcement during that time frame will not miss consideration for vacancies for which they applied.

## **Use Army Knowledge Online (AKO) to Stay in Contact While Deployed or TDY**

Email communications can be maintained by accessing the AKO account from any Internet terminal in the world. The AKO global email directory is more likely to be current than the Army's global email directory thereby providing a greater chance of reaching others by email. Users can further facilitate AKO capability by taking advantage of AKO's forwarding email rule. This rule allows users to automatically forward emails from any "us.army.mil" account to any other email address. This can be done by updating the AKO Account at <http://www.army.mil/> under *Quick Links*, then selecting the following choices: *Army Knowledge Online*, *Sign in Here*, *Personalize*, and *My Email*. Make desired changes under the Email Forwarding and Vacation Options.

## **Health And Benefits:**

### **TO ALL AFFECTED FEDERAL ENROLLEES OF THE BLUE CROSS AND BLUE SHIELD (BCBS) SERVICE BENEFIT PLAN IN TENNESSEE ENROLLMENT CODES 104, 105, 111, AND 112**

The Hospital Corporation of America (HCA) Hospitals in Tennessee no longer participate in the BCBS of Tennessee Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) Network effective December 31, 2002.

If a BCBS Plan is negotiating a PPO contract at the time of provider directory printing, the BCBS Plan is required to note this in their provider directory. BCBS of Tennessee made a decision not to notify BCBS Service Benefit Plan members of the negotiations with the HCA Hospitals in Tennessee. Therefore, we are authorizing an opportunity for

affected BCBS Service Benefit Plan enrollees, enrollment codes 104, 105, 111, and 112, in Tennessee to change their enrollment.

**This opportunity to change enrollment will begin immediately and continue through March 17, 2003. The effective date of all enrollment changes will be the beginning of the pay period following the one in which you make the change.**

### **IF YOU ARE AN EMPLOYEE**

You should take a copy of this letter to your personnel office and complete a new Health Benefits Registration Form, Standard Form (SF) 2809.

### **IF YOU ARE AN ANNUITANT**

If you are an annuitant under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), you should call the Retirement Information Office's toll-free number 1-888-767-6738 to make an enrollment change. Please have your CSS or FERS annuity claim number and your social security number available when calling. If you have impaired hearing, please call 1-800-878-5707.

We apologize for the inconvenience and thank you for your cooperation.

U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
Office of Insurance Programs

### **TSP NOT PICKING UP THE STEAM IN FY03**

The Thrift Savings Plan's C, S and I funds are not gaining any steam as the new calendar year begins. The C fund, which invests in common stocks, dipped 2.67 percent in January, after falling 5.85 percent in December. The fund has plunged 22.99 percent in the last 12 months. The S fund also slipped in January, falling 2.35 percent after a 4.32 drop in December. The S fund, which invests in the stocks of small- and mid-sized companies, has tumbled 18.42 percent since February 2002. The I fund, which invests in international stocks, declined 4.24 percent in January, after decreasing 3.27 percent in December. The fund has fallen 15 percent in the last year. The TSP's G fund rose by 0.35 percent in January, after gaining 0.38 in the last month of 2002. The fund, made up of government securities, has picked up 4.89 percent in the last 12 months. The F fund increased 0.10 percent in January, after posting a positive return of 2.08 percent in December. The fund, which consists of fixed-income bonds and is one of the TSP's most consistent performers, rose 9.52 percent over the last year.

#### **JANUARY RATES:**

G FUND: (.035%) F FUND: (.10%) C FUND: (2.67%) S FUND: (2.35%) I FUND: (4.24%)

Taken from Govexec.com by Kellie Lunney.

## **TSP CATCH-UP CONTRIBUTIONS PROGRAM TO START IN JULY**

Federal employees age 50 or older will be able to put extra money in their 401k- style Thrift Savings Plan accounts beginning in July. The change will allow employees over the age of 50 to contribute up to \$2,000 more per year than the standard limit on TSP contributions. The standard limit per pay period is 13 percent of pay for Federal Employees Retirement System employees and 8 percent for Civil Service Retirement System employees, up to an annual limit for 2003 of \$12,000. With the so-called "catch-up contributions," employee's age 50 or older could contribute as much as \$14,000 this year to their TSP accounts. To make catch-up contributions this year, employees must be 50 years old by Dec. 31. Employees must also make standard contributions up to the per-pay-period or annual limits if they want to also make catch-up contributions. For example, suppose a 50-year-old FERS employee who makes \$95,000 a year contributes 13 percent per pay period to the TSP. For the year, that's \$12,000, the maximum currently allowed. Under the catch-up contributions program, the employee could contribute an additional \$200 per pay period for 10 pay periods beginning in August to get up to the new limit of \$14,000 for the year. Unlike standard contributions, agencies do not match catch-up contributions. The contributions are invested among the five funds in the TSP (common stocks, international stocks, small- and medium-firm stocks, bonds and government securities) based on the contribution allocation that an employee picked for his or her standard contributions.

Federal retirees and other people who no longer work for the government are not eligible to make catch-up contributions. TAKEN FROM GOVEXEC By Brian Friel

## **2003 PAY RAISE FINALLY SETTLED: 4.1 PERCENT**

Congress has passed legislation to fund most of the government through the remainder of the fiscal year that started last October, including a 4.1 percent average general schedule pay raise for calendar year 2003, retroactive to the first pay period of the calendar year. Since a 3.1 percent raise already had taken effect by default when Congress failed to enact a raise figure last fall, new pay tables will have to be issued and retroactive payments will have to be made. It's currently unclear how fast that will happen, but it likely will be a matter of weeks, if not months, until the payroll systems of various agencies can be revised to catch up to the change. For the meantime, employees will continue receiving pay at the rates effective since the first pay period of January, which for most employees started January 11. TAKEN FROM FEDWEEK

## **FEDERAL LAWS GIVE MOBILIZED SOLDIERS PEACE OF MIND**

Army News Service reports that inquiries about federal laws that give financial relief to mobilized troops have doubled in recent months. Some soldiers are discovering that debts incurred after they were mobilized, along with car leases and cell phone bills, are their personal responsibility, said an official from the Office of the Judge Advocate General. Both the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act and the Uniformed Services Employment

and Reemployment Rights Act were enacted for the protection of service members, and soldiers are fully briefed on their rights and benefits during the mobilization process, said John Meixell, a JAG attorney with the Department of the Army's Legal Assistance Policy Division. Not only do soldiers have laws protecting their interest, there are thousands of volunteers who are working to make sure those laws are understood and enforced. For more on these and other deployment benefits, see

<http://www.military.com/deployment?ESRC=mr.nl> TAKEN FROM MILITARY  
REPORT.COM

## **Food For Thought:**

**"Change is inevitable, except from vending machines."**